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AUTHOR Tallerico, Marilyn
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ABSTRACT

Although the functional relationship between school board and superintendent is a critical connection that stands at the apex of the organizational pyramid in education, little is known about that linkage, other than the tension endemic to the relationship. This study therefore examines how superintendents and school boards interact and inquires into what shapes or guides their choices of behavior. Data were collected through indepth, semistructured interviews of 6 superintendents and 26 school board members from 6 public school districts in a major metropolitan area in the southwest United States. The districts were selected to provide diversity in size, type, and type of community. Interviews lasted between two and four hours, and analyses were inductive and occurred simultaneously with data collection. Analysis included coding, checking, probing, and verification of data. A discussion ensues of predominant patterns of interaction among superintendents and school board members, and of the underlying values revealed through their actions. These include (1) views of democratic governance; (2) role-conception; and (3) personal values. Two conceptual models are then described to shed further light on the data: the "agenda-building paradigm" and "negotiation and exchange" theory. These findings lead to the conclusion that local educational governance is a healthy social process of politically negotiated agenda-building, with multiple opportunities for board members to share in decision-making. References are listed. (TE)

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SUPERINTENDENT-SCHOOL BOARD RELATIONSHIPS: A CONTINUING CHALLENGE

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(March, 1989)

by

Marilyn Tallerico
Assistant Professor
Syracuse University
350 Huntington Hall
Syracuse, NY 13244
(315)443-2754

EA 020 816

THE DYNAMICS OF SUPERINTENDENT-SCHOOL BOARD RELATIONSHIPS: A CONTINUING CHALLENGE

Numerous scholars have spoken to the importance of continuing to seek ways to better understand superintendent and school board interaction. Gross (1958) asserted that "the relation between the board and the superintendent deserves intensive study....because they are at the heart of any educational problem and its solution" (p. 2). Some 25 years later, Cistone (1982) concurred and added that the focal point and "critical nexus [for local educational policy making] is the link between the board and the superintendent" (p. 1641).

Yet, when compared to the emphasis afforded other key actors and relationships within the educational system, relatively little attention has been directed toward the superintendent-school board linkage as a target of research (Cistone, 1982; Crowson, 1987). Griffiths (1965) commented that research on school boards has concentrated too much on the social status of board members and not enough on their behavior. He also suggested that survey studies tend to ignore the live interactions of people and that, "We need different methods of gathering data so that we can have behavioral data to solve behavioral problems" (p.40). The scarcity and limitedness of inquiries in this area caused Boyd (1976) to lament that, until additional research is conducted, "we shall have to content ourselves with informed speculation about the governance of schools" (p. 572).

The problem addressed in this study, therefore, is that although the functional relationship between school board and superintendent is a critical connection which stands at the apex of the organizational pyramid in education, there is little known about the dynamics of that linkage. The extant literature documents the <u>tension</u> endemic to the relationship...an apparent product of (a) the perennial disequilibrium between lay control and the power of professional expertise, and (b) the ambiguous nature of policy-making and administrative functions in educational governance (Boyd, 1975; Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970; Institute for Educational Leadership, 1986; Tucker & Ziegler, 1980; Zeigler & Jennings, 1974; Zeigler, Kehoe, & Reisman, 1985).

The purpose of this study was to get underneath that tension: to examine and describe how superintendents and school board members function within and around it, and to uncover what shapes or guides their choices of behaviors. It was an exploratory field study and, consistent with the tenets of naturalistic inquiry, no preordinate hypotheses were specified (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Bogdan & Taylor, 1984; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Notwithstanding Cistone's (1982) contention that, to date, much of the research related to the superintendent-school board relationship has been "characterized by hortatory and nontheoretical perspectives" (p. 1638), it was anticipated that during the course of the present inquiry, as patterns emerged and

preliminary analyses were conducted, the data themselves would point towards meaningful conceptual frameworks (Dobbert, 1982; Filstead, 1970; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Owens, 1982).

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

Since relationships and interactions are complex and difficult to measure quantitatively, this study employed qualitative methods. The principal means of data collection were in-depth, semi-structured interviews of superintendents and school board members from a purposive sample of six public school districts in a major metropolitan area in the Southwest United States. The districts were selected so as to provide diversity within the sample in terms of (a) size of district (small, medium, large)[1], (b) type of district (elementary, high school, unified)[2], and (c) type of community (rural, suburban, urban). Consistent with Lincoln's (1985) counsel, a goal of purposive sampling in naturalistic research is to "maximize the range of perspectives" in the context under study (p. 147). Accordingly, a total of 32 participants from the 6 districts were interviewed: 6 superintendents and 26 governing board members. Each interview lasted between two and four hours.

It was assumed that the interaction between interviewer and respondent would help clarify unique realities and lead to greater understanding of meanings and motives pertinent to the study's intent (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982; Filstead, 1970; Gorden, 1980). Moreover, in justifying their choice of an interview strategy for testing for the existence of a "world of behind-the-scenes haggling" for school superintendents and city managers, Zeigler et al. (1985) asserted, "There are only two ways to find out: to watch them or to ask them. When we watched them, we missed it" (p. 91).

Analyses of data were inductive and occurred simultaneously to data collection. This "constant comparative" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) method of analysis involved ongoing collection, coding, checking, probing, and verification of the data which emerged from the audio-taped interviews. "Member checks" and "peer consultation" were the primary means of triangulation for trustworthiness and confirmability (Bogdan & Taylor, 1984; Owens, 1982). A computerized textual data analysis program was used to organize, code, search, sort, and retrieve the transcribed interview data (Seidel et al., 1985). The substantive coding and clustering of content categories drove the analysis and reduction processes, and the concomitant conceptual development.

FINDINGS AND PATTERNS

What do superintendents and school board members do to work within, around, or through the pervasive tension inherent in the relationship? Although the complete research report (Tallerico, 1988) contains comprehensive details and the respondents' rich, descriptive language to elaborate and support each finding, space limitations herein preclude exhaustive delineation of same. Nonetheless, although interviewees reported many subtle, situationally-modified, and idiosyncratic behaviors, several important patterns could be identified. Specifically, with

respect to their interactions with the superintendent, board member behavioral inclinations emerged as clusters along what may be viewed as a continuum ranging from (a) passive acquiescence, to (b) proactive supportiveness, to (c) restive vigilance. The three patterns are substantiated by both (a) the distinct ways in which information is collected and utilized, and (b) the scope, purpose, and degree of board member involvement in school district affairs.

For example, passive acquiescent board members were inclined to rely primarily on the information and interpretations provided by administrative staff, limited their participation in district activities to regular board meetings or required ceremonial events such as end-of-year student graduations, referred constituent concerns to the superintendent for resolution or delegation, and consistently deferred to the superintendent's judgment and recommendations. In contrast, board members inclined toward restive vigilant behavior personally visited with teachers and central office staff on a regular basis, cultivated a wide range of information sources internal and external to the district, participated in district and state educational committees, followed up on or suggested resolutions of constituent concerns referred to the administration, persistently engaged in activities to build support for their preferred objectives, and purposefully exercised their right to oversee and govern the district, providing a check and balance to the superintendent's and other administrators' operations. Proactive supportive behavioral propensities exhibit similarities, on the one hand, to restive vigilance in that the degree of active involvement in school affairs is high. On the other hand, they are similar to passive acquiescence in that their usual purpose is to advocate and support, rather than scrutinize or challenge, the superintendent's stance.

For superintendents, patterns of behavioral inclinations may likewise be described in terms of a range on a continuum, with the poles of the continuum broadly defined as either "more" or "less" controlling. Purpose and degree of control are factors which help distinguish these two patterns. For example, more-controlling superintendents were inclined to use informal study sessions and other interactions with board members to channel selected information and educate or persuade towards a predetermined direction, consistent with the superintendent's or other professional educators' views of what is best. In contrast, less-controlling superintendents utilized those same study sessions and interactions to seek and foster a wide range of input or to negotiate agreements by surfacing and accommodating divergent expectations. While the focus of interview discussions was the board-superintendent relationship, it is clear that the strategies reported are not exclusive to that context.

Interestingly, many of the reported tension-accommodationist behaviors of board members and superintendents are used almost unconsciously. Rather than viewing their actions as a function

of strategic planning or systematic forethought, these key players often attribute behaviors to intuition, "gut", good judgment, common sense, politics, "feel", people skills, or similarly nebulous, variably defined phenomena. This finding supports Huff's (1985) view that superintendents' actions are complex, capable of contradiction, and have both rational and nonrational aspects.

Additional patterns were identified by viewing board members' and superintendents' behavioral "types" in relationship to each other. Accordingly, passive acquiescent and proactive supportive board member behaviors were found to be more often associated with less-controlling superintendent behavioral inclinations than with those that were more-controlling. Restive vigilance was rarely associated with the less-controlling cluster of superintendent behaviors.

Also, the variables of board member gender and occupation emerged in identifiable patterns appearing to be related to behavioral inclinations. Specifically, female board members were found to more often exhibit restive vigilance than did their male counterparts. And board members who were not employed outside the home (whether retirees or homemakers) consistently tended to be of the active ilk (either proactive supportive or restive vigilant). Passive acquiescent board members were never retirees or homemakers.

UNDERLYING DYNAMICS

In addition to identifying predominant patterns of interactions among superintendents and school board members, another purpose of this inquiry was to uncover the operative forces (that is, the dynamics) underlying the reported behaviors. This query was aimed at discovering and explaining why superintendents and board members behave as they do to contend with the tension endemic to their relationship.

It was found that the dynamics affecting behavioral choices could be explained in part by two sociopolitical conceptual frameworks and, in part, by three differing sets of ideological/value underpinnings as articulated by the respondents themselves. Regarding the latter, board members and superintendents identified the following three explanations for their actions.

Views of democratic governance

Three distinct conceptualizations of the democratic process, as related to the governance of schools, emerged. Some respondents espoused a traditional/normative interpretation, viewing local educational governance as a bastion of grassroots democracy and lay control. In this view, political control is exercised via lines of legal authority: local voters elect a presumably representative school board to serve as legislative body, a superintendent is employed to serve executive and administrative functions, and it is assumed that the executive arm follows the instructions of the legislative, which in turn acts in the best interests of constituents (Mann, 1977; Zeigler & Jennings, 1974).

A different view of democratic theory is the professional-dominance or technological interpretation. This viewpoint surfaced among superintendents whose behaviors may be characterized as more-controlling, and among board members of both passive acquiescent and proactive supportive inclinations. The underlying assumption of this interpretation is that professional educators are the most likely to have the "right" answer; that is, to be in possession of "truth" about educational issues (Sergiovanni et al., 1987; Zeigler & Jennings, 1974). Therefore, those who ascribe to this view tend to solicit, defer to, and support the recommendations of school administrators; and the superintendent is seen as the appropriate dominant actor in decision- and policy-making.

A third interpretation of the democratic functioning of school governance lies somewhere in between the previous two. This viewpoint recognizes the existence of several safety-valve operatives which serve to mediate and balance the degree of control exercised by constituents, the professional/executive branch, and the lay/legislative branch of governance. These mechanisms subtly and indirectly define parameters, set limitations, and constrain the latitudes within which superintendents and school boards function (Boyd, 1976; Hentges, 1985; Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970). Essentially, governance is seen as a shared function, with superintendents and board members attempting to anticipate community expectations.

Role-conception

Their interpretations of the appropriate respective roles of superintendents and school board members were also identified by these key players as explanations for their behaviors. In other words, consistent with the preceding notions of democracy in school governance, there exist different understandings of who should direct and control decision making, and of the relative wisdom/expertise of professionals versus lay representatives. Passive acquiescent and proactive supportive board members, for example, typically ascribed to a technological interpretation of democracy and therefore tended to see their job as one of deference to the superintendent's expertise and concomitant assumption of a relatively subservient leadership role in governance. More-controlling superintendents likewise revealed an underlying adherence to the role of professional dominance, more often referring to their board members as amateurs rather than collaborators. In contrast, less-controlling superintendents viewed the role relationship as a sort of partnership of co-experts, fully accepting the notion of accountability to their patrons' elected representatives. Restive vigilant board members consistently emphasized the democratic function of lay control and an active oversight role of both administrative operations and district policy-making; they regard expertise not as the singular domain of professional educators, but as equally characteristic of themselves and their fellow board members. Thus, interpretations of their own and each others' roles seem to underlie the actions of board members

and superintendents, and to shed some light on the differences in their reported behavioral inclinations. This finding is not surprising, of course, given what is known about role and small-group theories (for example, Bales & Slater, 1955; Katz & Kahn, 1978).

Personal values

A third operative force which emerged from the respondents' explanations of their behaviors pertains to the value-premises underlying their interactions. Specifically, issues of character and trust surfaced repeatedly as board members and superintendents explicated their functional relationships and efforts to accommodate the tension therein. Their emphasis on affective dimensions such as honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, and forthrightness seemed to be indicative of the underlying importance which these key players ascribe to the moral and ethical dimensions of leadership and governance. It became clear that perceptions of character and trust colored their differing behavioral inclinations. For example, a partial explanation of the restiveness of vigilant board members was their lack of trust of the superintendent or their doubt about the superintendent's forthrightness. In contrast, proactive supportive board members held the superintendent's integrity in such high regard that they were inclined to describe their distrustful colleagues as excessively demanding or impossible to please. More-controlling superintendents often indicated reluctance to entrust their boards with major decisions, instead preferring to closely guide and shape the direction of district decision-making administratively. This latter phenomenon is linked to the professional-dominance view of appropriate governance roles.

The question of trust, in particular, is not new to the study of governance or management (Barnard, 1938; Dykes, 1965; Gross, 1958; IEL, 1986). According to Iannaccone and Lutz (1970), "perceptual differences often create difficulties between school boards and superintendents. Neither intends to act in bad faith, but each may believe that the other is less than honest and fair" (p. 140).

INTERPRETIVE MODELS

While ideological underpinnings and perceptions of role, democratic functions, character, and trust serve as partial explanations of the dynamics underlying local educational governance relationships, additional explanatory power may be derived from two interpretive models present in the sociopolitical literature.

Agenda-building Paradigm

In their research and scholarship about participation in American politics, Cobb and Elder (1983) develop a conceptual model which provides a framework for understanding the pre-decisional social processes which shape what occurs at the decisional stages of policy making. The essence of this paradigm is that, contrary to the notion of minimal and impotent popular participation suggested by modern/technological interpretations of democratic theory, there is actually a broad range of

important influences exercised by individuals and groups to impact the substance of governmental decisions and policies. These influences can be more subtle and complex than the overt act of voting. They include multiple behaviors which, taken together, shape the organization's systemic agenda.

It should be noted that Cobb and Elder (1983) distinguish between institutional and systemic agenda. The institutional is the narrowly defined, written set of specific items scheduled for active consideration by a particular institutional decision-making body. The systemic agenda is broader and more abstract in scope. This distinction is significant when the model is applied to local educational governance. For example, an oft-used inquiry in survey studies is, "Who constructs the agenda in this school district?" Typically, the respondent will conjure up an image of the written packet of materials prepared for each public meeting of the governing board and thus retort, "The superintendent" or, perhaps, "The superintendent and board president." According to Cobb and Elder's paradigm, such a response is likely to be accurate only for the literal, institutional agenda. The systemic agenda incorporates a greatly expanded perspective on how and why those specific items ever came to reach the point of pen being put to paper to delineate a particular session's content.

To illustrate these and other ideas included in the model, the range of behaviors and patterns previously described in these findings may be viewed as equivalents of Cobb and Elder's purported multiple means of directly and indirectly shaping the systemic agenda of governance. On the part of board members, for example, the cultivation and utilization of information sources, participation in school and district committees, seed-planting of ideas and directions, bargaining, persuading, compromising, coalition-building, peace-keeping, scrutinizing, cheerleading, monitoring, challenging, and fact-finding are all activities which may be defined in Cobb and Elder's terms as "pre-decisional social processes" (p. 163) which shape what ultimately occurs in the decision arena. Similarly, superintendents' attentiveness to timing, educating the board, utilizing structural mechanisms, anticipating board and community zones of tolerance, gatekeeping information, and the like, may also be construed in these terms. Although the authors did not conceptualize or apply their model within the context of superintendent-school board dynamics, it seems logical and appropriate to do so. Taken together, these behind-the-scenes behaviors and interactions can be viewed as agenda-building activities which help define the alternatives and create the conditions which lead to subsequent formal decision making.

Negotiation and Exchange

The metaphor of a "negotiated system" is another interpretive tool which can add a degree of depth to the understanding of superintendent-school board dynamics. The concepts of negotiation and exchange are inherent in the social processes of agenda-building just described, as well as in the

emphasis on communication, bargaining, and unwritten agreements discussed as examples of reported interactions.

Intrinsic to exchange theory and the negotiated system metaphor is that, in social interactions, "both [or all] participants gain something, and both [all] have to pay a price"; "no exchange will take place unless both parties to it feel, at the time, that they will benefit from it" (Blau, 1963, pp. 123 & 138). Also endemic to this framework, (and directly applicable to school board members and superintendents), is that the players possess differing resources, interests, motives, and sanctions which are used in a variety of ways as bargaining currency. An underlying assumption is that negotiation is purposeful: the actors engage in bargaining and exchange in order to forge treaties and build support for individual and/or collective beliefs and goals (Homans, 1961). Thus, social exchanges are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring. Blau (1986) draws an important distinction between strictly economic exchange and social exchange; the latter entails diffuse and unspecified future obligations. "The nature of the return cannot be bargained about but must be left to the discretion of the one who makes it" (Blau, 1986, p. 93). Consequently, social exchange requires trusting others to repay their obligations...a partial explanation, perhaps, for the focus on character and trust which was alluded to in another section of this article.

Applying this conceptual model to the present research, then, it is clear that superintendents and school board members possess differing sets of bargaining chips. For example, there is considerable variability in the quantity and quality of time, energy, knowledge, self-confidence, ego-needs, and allies that each brings to the social exchange. Haller and Strike (1986) aver that the major resources of school boards are their legal authority and their "claim to represent the interests of the electorate" (p. 73). Zeigler and Jennings (1974) view superintendents' resources as including: technical and professional expertise, greater longevity in their position than typical of school board members, and ready access to the decision-making tools of information, staff, time, funds, and communication mechanisms within the organization. Although the writings of Zeigler and Jennings (1974) reflect a preponderance of assets in the superintendents' possession, Hermann (1986) points out numerous limitations on the chief executive's power. Blau's (1963) conceptualizations are compatible with Hermann's (1986) and Boyd's (1975) notions of the constraining influences on administrative prerogatives which are an implicit part of school boards' tools and actions.

In sum, both superintendents and school board members command bargaining resources which may be employed as currency in social exchanges. The stakes in this negotiated system are the influence and control of the agenda, as well as the stability and continued viability of the functional relationship itself. The manner in which these chips are played runs the gamut of behavioral inclinations portrayed previously as patterns on

continua. The rules of the game in this bargaining milieu vary widely; they seem to be related to the interpretations of role, democratic theory, and trust explicated in foregoing discussions. Like much political bargaining, unpredictability, ambiguity, fluidity, and non-rationality are significant aspects of the negotiated-system metaphor.

CONCLUSIONS

Taken together, the findings summarized above illuminate the conclusion that local educational governance is a dynamic social process of politically negotiated agenda-building. The process is neither random nor undemocratic, although clearly many important activities are subtle and unobservable to the public.

Restive vigilant board members (many of whom are female and whose numbers have continued to increase in recent years) engage most actively in shaping this joint process with the superintendent. They are the ones who are constantly questioning, conducting independent fact-finding missions, pursuing alternatives, and building support for their ideas. Yet all participants in the study were found to behave purposively, consistent with their interpretations of role and democratic ideologies.

An arsenal of tools enable these purposive behaviors. Although superintendents possess several structural and technical resources unique to their position (e.g., ability to delegate to staff; longevity in education), board members are empowered by their access to people, multiple information sources, and political tools. The latter include their claim to represent the electorate, their ability to vote for or veto specific recommendations of the superintendent, and their power to evaluate and fire the chief executive.

Thus, the key players are reasonably evenly matched as they bargain and mobilize resources to shape the systemic agenda of governance. This mobilization and negotiation are the essence of the democratic nature of the process. For example, as active board members participate in district curriculum committees with staff, channel teacher or parent concerns to central office, follow up on those concerns by monitoring results, and build coalitions to support their vision of preferred solutions to specific issues, they are simultaneously containing and expanding an agenda which might otherwise be designed autonomously by professional educators. Applying Cobb and Elder's (1983) conceptual framework, purposive interactions such as those just described are powerful pre-decisional social processes which create the conditions and shape the choices of alternatives upon which policies and practices are constructed ... thus lending additional support to the conclusion that the local educational governance process is dynamic and democratic.

Directly related to these concepts of dynamic and democratic interaction in building the systemic agenda is Blau's (1963; 1986) notion that all social behavior may be analyzed and understood in terms of an exchange process. Superintendents and board members both have something to gain (e.g., the direction

policy will take; personal sense of accomplishment; stability in the functional relationship) and both have to pay a price (e.g., compromise or deference to the other in order to strike a bargain or gain a vote) as they negotiate their individual/collective agenda. Reciprocity and exchange were evident, for example, in the unwritten agreements which were forged via what a number of board members referred to as "horse-trading," "making deals," "giving a little to get something" and what several superintendents expressed as "knowing when to hold 'em and when to fold 'em" and "the need to let them win sometimes." An assumption underlying exchange behavior is that goals are fluid, socially constructed, negotiable phenomena.

Taken together, these various agenda-building strategies and behind-the-scenes negotiations provide multiple opportunities to inject ideas (and demands) into a system that some have portrayed as closed, dominated by the superintendent, and undemocratic (Kerr, 1964; Zeigler & Jennings, 1974). These latter two scholars and others have since modified those views (Boyd, 1976; Lutz & Iannaccone, 1978; Tucker & Zeigler, 1980; Zeigler, Kehoe, & Reisman, 1985), and the present study confirms the revised interpretation: that there is evidence that local educational governance is democratic. The findings presented here illustrate that access to, and influence on, district decision-making is real. Although board members with passive acquiescent and proactive supportive tendencies decline exercising the legislative function of checking and balancing executive action, restive vigilant board members do...and with vigor.

IMPLICATIONS

These findings and conclusions can be interpreted to indicate a general healthiness of the local educational governance system. There are multiple opportunities for board members to share in decision making and shape the systemic agenda. There are ever-increasing numbers of females being elected to school boards, especially in the Southwest (Cameron et al., 1988), and females tend to be active board members.

Yet at the same time that these indicators may reveal health and vitality, it is disturbing that passive acquiescence was also found in these districts. What contribution is made by those persons who behave as though their primary democratic functions are to get elected, attend required formal meetings, and cast votes largely without question of the administration's stance? While restive vigilant strategies serve to continually expand the access points for layperson input and influence, others fail to take advantage of those opportunities.

A second implication of this study concerns theory and method. Two action-based, sociopolitical theoretical frameworks (namely, Cobb and Elder's [1983] agenda-building paradigm and Blau's [1963; 1986] social exchange model) proved to be powerful explanatory tools. Yet, in the extant literature, neither had previously been utilized in the study of local educational governance. In contrast to the hortatory and largely nontheoretical perspectives which have characterized

superintendent-school board research, the constructs of the agenda-building and social exchange paradigms provide a framework for understanding the dynamics of local educational governance relationships. Together, these two theoretical models allow a conceptualization of the superintendent-school board relationship as one in which skilled people, armed with many powerful tools, engage in a dynamic process of negotiation and enter into ever-changing coalitions. As illustrated in these findings and conclusions, and as summarized by Cobb and Elder (1983), "Whereas modern democratic theory suggests minimal popular participation, the agenda-building framework makes allowances for continuing [layperson] involvement; it broadens the range of recognized influences on the policymaking process" (p. 164). Thus, an implication for further research is that this broadened range of recognized influences be taken into account when conducting future studies. Means for doing so include using action-based theoretical models (such as those elaborated here), and employing interactive data-gathering techniques (rather than static methods such as structured survey questionnaires).

Another recommendation is that additional research examine the nature and composition of board members' personal networks. Since active board members were found to foster and purposively utilize their connections with staff, constituents, and others, and if Cobb and Elder's (1983) constructs about the role such connections play in expanding participation in the systemic agenda are true, then perhaps important differences can be found in the interpersonal networks of restive vigilants versus proactive supporters. In a long term study of several districts, individuals and groups which comprise the networks of different types of board members might be identified and analyzed. Such examination could lead to a better understanding of exactly for <u>whom</u> these negotiations and agenda-building strategies expand access and opportunity. Although McCarty and Ramsey (1971) had found that the aggregate influence of a community power structure on a school board and its superintendent is usually relatively low, perhaps the description and analysis presented in this study may assist other researchers in identifying connections hitherto not apparent.

FINAL THOUGHT

In describing the burgeoning complexity of organizational life and leadership in American public education, Tyack and Hansot (1982) conclude that "It would take a political scientist's lifelong work to disentangle even the local story" (p. 248). Necessarily, the evidence and interpretations discussed in this article provide but partial and time-bound ways of understanding school district governance and its key players. The "story," local or otherwise, remains intriguingly entangled.

ENDNOTES

1. Small = fewer than 3,500 total student enrollment; medium = 3,500 to 8,000; large = over 8,000 students.

2. Elementary districts include grades K-8; high school 9-12; unified districts are K-12.

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